

**UNLIKELY HEROES**  
**By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.**



There is an interesting phenomenon in the world of episodic drama that I would like to share with any of you who have an affinity for things dark and an appreciation for the anti-hero. Two series come to mind because they are coming to an end, and I am having trouble processing my loss and grief. These men have become part of my life and have left an indelible impression on my mind. I have genuine affection for them despite their heinous deeds. If you want to test your unconditional positive regard, watch *Dexter* and *Breaking Bad*. What makes these cable network shows so special and phenomenal are the characters we shouldn't love, but we do. The reasons we do are Michael C. Hall and Bryan Cranston.

*Dexter* is the story of a youth-turned-blood-splatter expert whose homicidal tendencies have led him to become the epitome of a serial killer. We shouldn't be rooting for him but we do, week after bloody week until we are left hanging by the threads of plots so twisted they can't even begin to be unraveled. How will they end his reign of murder? Or, will they? What is the moral dilemma for us as we cheer him on? In our voyeuristic attachment to this soul-damaged person, what is it that we respond to? Is it the fact that he is very good at what he does and takes great pride in his actions? Is it his ability to find some normalcy in the midst of his psychopathic life?

*Dexter* is so beautifully complex that you cannot help but be fascinated by everything he does; how he does it, and how we want to see him do it and get away with it. To be fair, as shocking as the premise is, the blood and gore are as integral to the story as he is. "There will be blood" takes on a whole new meaning with *Dexter* who has given us seven amazing seasons. If you have never seen the show, be forewarned it is not for everyone. I will miss Dexter Morgan and all the people who came into his orbit or onto his table. Thank you Michael C. Hall for making *Dexter* the most exciting serial killer ever.



Walter White, portrayed by Bryan Cranston in *Breaking Bad*, is initially a timid, mild-mannered man who is about to lose everything. With that in mind, he makes a bold life choice to leave security behind for his wife and children. His actions begin as good intentions, but they eventually transform Walter into one of the most brilliant, ruthless, calculated and effective criminals ever to set foot in a meth lab. Scarface has nothing on Heisenberg, the alter ego that is created by his psyche through necessity to protect what is most important to him – family. What he goes through from his initial idea to where he ends up is an odyssey worthy of Homer. We watch with awe at how proficient he becomes, at how far he will go, and how powerfully he evolves. Walter White goes from impotent to omnipotent in five seasons. What sort of end would befit his caliber of drug manufacturer? It is sure to be of 100% pure quality. That is how the whole series has been. With Aaron Paul as Jesse, *Breaking Bad* is a masterpiece of both acting and writing. Perfect for binge viewing, *Breaking Bad* is already a classic no matter how it all turns out.

I give both *Dexter* and *Breaking Bad* five sad goodbyes.

